



**King County**

Department of Natural Resources and Parks

**Solid Waste Division**

# TALES FROM THE WASTE-LESS LAND

Master Recycler Composter (MRC) Newsletter

Summer 2004

## A SLEW of NEW Brochures!

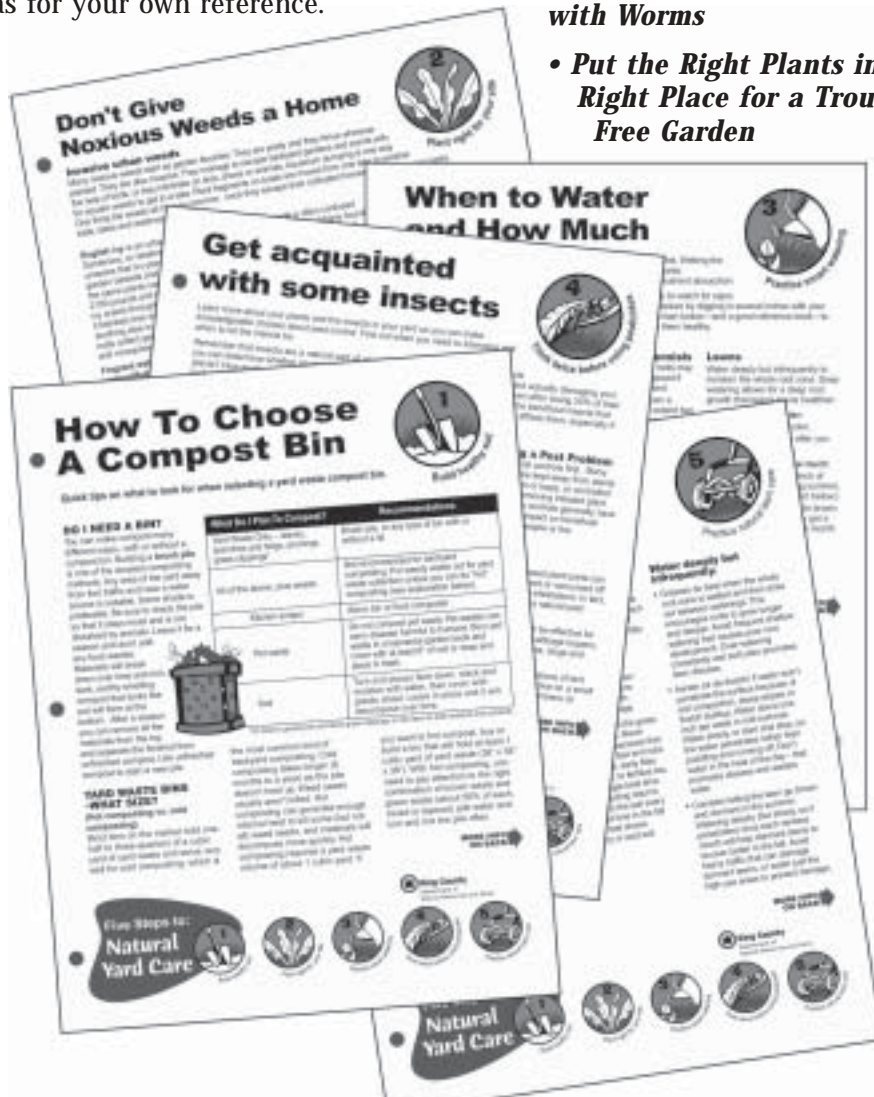
King County has been busy generating a host of literature in their new organics series. Remember the *Five Steps to Natural Yard Care* booklet? Each step has been expanded upon in a series of very helpful flyers that are available to you for outreach activities as well as for your own reference.

Here is the complete list of King County's one-page flyers in the organics series:

- **How to Choose a Compost Bin**
- **Portable Wood & Wire Composting Bin**
- **Kitchen Waste Composting with Worms**
- **Put the Right Plants in the Right Place for a Trouble Free Garden**

- **Don't Give Noxious Weeds a Home**
- **When to Water and How Much**
- **Get Acquainted with Some Insects**
- **A Recent Federal Ruling may Affect how you Garden**
- **A Perfectly Lovely Lawn: Chemically Free & Safe to Play on**

Please call the MRC Hotline 206-343-8505 to request copies of any or all of these new brochures. Or, please call if you have an idea for a topic that is not yet represented in this series.



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# Vermicomposting at Briarwood Elementary School

*Submitted by Suzanne Bagdon, Class 24*

in October 2003, Renton's Briarwood Elementary School contacted Kinley Deller at the King County Solid Waste Division on their groundbreaking food waste composting program. King County has partnered with select businesses and schools in King County to help manage their food waste more economically and environmentally. King County provided technical assistance and a significant portion of the capital costs to set up composting units for schools that qualified for the program. In Briarwood's case, King County covered 87.5% of the cost of the composting unit.

Tina Wear (Briarwood's Student Leadership Team Coordinator) and I applied for a grant from the Briarwood PTA to cover the remaining 12.5% cost to bring a BioStack Vermicomposting unit to Briarwood.



Today the unit and lots of worms live at Briarwood and the compost process has begun!

Tina and I are responsible for the food gathering, feeding worms, monitoring the unit and harvesting of the compost. These activities will be integrated into the gardening activities that are planned with the Student Leadership Team. I will provide on-going worm bin education to help the Student Leadership team understand how the worms and the bin work. They will also perform some basic scientific experiments on the benefits of compost.

If you have any questions on the BioStack unit, please contact Suzanne Bagdon at [suzbagdon@yahoo.com](mailto:suzbagdon@yahoo.com) or Tina Wear at [weart@issaquah.webnet.edu](mailto:weart@issaquah.webnet.edu).

## Learn How to Make Your Garden Greener!



Are you a member of a gardening club or neighborhood association within King County? Do you want to learn tips for planting pest-resistant, vibrant plants and other green gardening techniques? If so, please contact the Natural Lawn & Garden Hotline at 206-633-0224 to schedule a free Green Gardening presentation any time through the rest of the year.

The Green Gardening program is sponsored by Seattle Public Utilities and funded by the Local Hazardous Waste Management Program in King County. In a county-wide effort to promote alternatives to pesticides, the Green Gardening program offers the following free presentations to choose from:

**Vibrant Garden by Design**—learn important garden techniques to achieve pleasing style while also minimizing the use of landscape chemicals.

**Salmon-Friendly Gardening**—examine the connection between yard health, water quality, and salmon survival.

**Alternatives to Lawn & Garden Chemicals**—learn the basics to having a healthy, beautiful yard while reducing pesticides, costs, and work.

**Pest-Resistant Plants**—find out about plant varieties that thrive in our climate and resist plant damage.

**Weeds, Feeds and What a Lawn REALLY Needs** - discover safe

strategies for maintaining a healthy, chemical-free lawn.

Each presentation includes a slideshow, interactive component, and the latest take-home literature. Call the Natural Lawn & Garden Hotline (206-633-0224) today to schedule one or more of the Green Gardening program's free presentations.

## Next Standard MRC Training

The next standard MRC training will be held in early 2005 and will most likely be held in south King County. The next *Tales* will provide details on the location and dates for that training. If you know anyone who may be interested in joining, contact Karen May at [karen.may@metrokc.gov](mailto:karen.may@metrokc.gov) or 206-296-4353 for an application.



# Get Out of the Sun and Under a Tent this Summer!

Sign up today for fun, shady MRC outreach opportunities to keep you cool this season and into the fall! Please call the MRC Hotline (206-343-8505) or sign up online at [www.mrcvolunteer.org](http://www.mrcvolunteer.org) for one or more of the following upcoming MRC events:

## August events

**Saturday, August 7**—Auburn Good Ol' Days. Waste reduction education table. *SHIFT: 3-6pm.*

**Sunday, August 8**—Auburn Good Ol' Days. *SHIFTS: 12-3pm & 3-6pm.*

## September events -

**Wednesday, September 15**—SeaTac Yard Debris Composting Class. Teach SeaTac residents the in's and out's of yard waste composting. *SHIFT: 6-7pm.*

## October events -

**Saturday, October 2**—Issaquah Salmon Days. King County's Household Hazardous Waste Children's Interactive Exhibit. *SHIFTS: 9am-1pm & 1-5pm.*

**Sunday, October 3**—Issaquah Salmon Days. HHW Children's Interactive Exhibit. *SHIFTS: 9am-1pm & 1-5pm.*

**Saturday, October 9**—SeaTac's Fall Special Recycling Collection Event. *SHIFTS: 9am-12pm & 12-3pm.*

**Saturday, October 9**—Molbak's Nursery Question & Answer Table. *SHIFT: 10am-12pm.*

**Saturday, October 23**—SeaTac's Yard Debris Collection Event. *SHIFTS: 9am-12pm & 12-3pm.*

**Saturday, October 23**—Molbak's Nursery Question & Answer Table.

*SHIFT: 10am-12pm.*

Log onto the MRC website [www.mrcvolunteer.org](http://www.mrcvolunteer.org) to sign up for outreach shifts, learn more about upcoming continuing education events, read previous newsletters and search for fellow active MRCs today!!



## 2004 Advanced Training in the Spring AND Fall!

The focus of the 2004 Advanced Training was Bringing Natural Yard Care Steps to Life! Fifteen MRCs participated in the spring portion of this training on Saturday March 13<sup>th</sup> in Issaquah.

Your fellow MRCs participated in a 5-hour advanced training on **Natural Yard Care**, including in-depth information and hands-on activities to help get ready for the flood of spring outreach activities. MRCs bolstered their knowledge about issues that can affect the health of our yards and our watersheds. They also rotated through hands-on activities addressing right plant/right place, compost, label reading, and putting manual lawn treatments (weed pullers and moss raking) to the test.

The Spring Natural Yard Care Training will be complemented with another Natural Yard Care Training in the Fall. This will be a great opportunity to brush up on your yard care skills and learn about yard care issues of relevance for the fall season. Stay tuned for details!

## Pesticide News You Can Use

If you're interested in the topic of pesticides, look up this article from the June 3, 2004 LA Times archives by Emily Green, Times Staff Writer. The article's title is "What's Lost When the Spray Clears - Ecological Effects of

Lawn and Garden Pesticide Use". The subheading reads: "Many home gardeners use pesticides, but an unfortunate side effect may be the estrangement of birds and bees, and the sunset of a simpler life."



Cartoon by J.J. Guajardo

# Save Money, Improve Soil, Keep Down Weeds and Get Plants Off to a Great Start!

How can you do all this? Buy compost on sale this September, and spread it on your garden! Nothing improves soil more than the addition of compost. This fall, simply spread compost over your entire planting area. It's like bringing the health of the forest floor to your garden. Weeds will be very slow to establish in this "mulch" of compost. Meanwhile your soil will become a friendlier place for plant roots and the soil critters that feed them. Applying compost in the fall provides an extra bonus when planting trees and shrubs as compost will promote strong root growth all winter and the plants require less tender loving care next spring and summer. Less weeding, less watering, healthier plants—what more can you ask for?

## How about...

...discounts?!!! Northwest Natural Yard Days continue this September, sponsored by Seattle Public Utilities, King County Solid Waste Division and a number of other area agencies. Look for substantial discounts on bagged compost and organic lawn and garden fertilizers at local lawn & garden retailers and nurseries throughout King County. For a list of these participating retailers, go to [www.seattle.gov/util/services](http://www.seattle.gov/util/services), or call the Natural Lawn & Garden Hotline at 206-633-0224.



Cartoons by J.J. Guajardo



## Have You Reached 40 Yet?



Whether you're still on your way to completing your 40 hours of MRC outreach, or you've far surpassed that goal and are still an active volunteer, please don't forget to **turn in your outreach hours**. Each and every hour you give back as an MRC volunteer is appreciated and important to the life of the overall program. You can enter in your hours online or call the MRC Hotline for a blank form:

MRC Hotline-206-343-8505

MRC Website-[www.mrcvolunteer.org](http://www.mrcvolunteer.org)

## Solid Waste Advisory Committee Openings

If you are interested in solid waste and recycling issues, you can represent your community on the King County Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC). King County Solid Waste Division is currently seeking applicants for four citizen positions on the Committee. The SWAC is chartered as a citizen's advisory body that provides input on solid waste management issues and decisions affecting county residents and the services they receive. The committee is balanced geographically and includes recipients of solid waste services, public interest groups, recycling businesses, solid waste collection companies, labor and local elected officials. The average time commitment for SWAC members is five hours each month. All meetings are held in the morning on the third Friday of each month. Members are appointed to an initial three-year term and may be reappointed to serve an additional term. To request an application or for more information, please contact Diane Yates at 206-296-4406 or [diane.yates@metrokc.gov](mailto:diane.yates@metrokc.gov)



*If you would like to highlight an MRC for a job well done, this is the place. Call the hotline with your nominations (206-343-8505)!*

## Master Recycler Composters

# In the Sun

**Steve Tracy (Class 7)** is no stranger to waste reduction and reuse. Years ago, Steve went through the Master Conserver program, which was hosted by the Washington Energy Extension Service in response to the energy crises of the 1970's and early 80's. The program focused on energy education and conservation measures, including home insulation, solar energy, water management and more. After receiving his Master Conserver certificate, Steve continued down the path of waste reduction education and signed up for the MRC program in the early 1990's. The MRC program gave Steve exactly what he was looking for: a more structured approach for letting people know about the benefits of recycling and composting. To this day, Steve is one of the most dedicated and persistent MRCs in the program! When asked to reflect on his participation in the MRC program, Steve

had the following to say:

### ***What is your favorite type of outreach?***

*Hands on projects like building worm bins or compost bins.*

### ***What is one of the most interesting things you've learned in class or out at events?***

*Learning about the new Gore system for commercial composting which is being used at the Cedar Grove Composting facility.*

### ***Do you have any words of wisdom to share with your fellow MRCs?***

*Boeing Surplus is a good source for acquiring excess building materials, such as crates, for making worm bins and other compost bins. Plus, a lot of the materials are free!*

### ***Anything else you'd like to share?***

*I've recently been helping friends and relatives clean out their garages and basements and am realizing just how*

*much stuff is out there. I've also realized that local thrift stores are becoming overloaded with donations. I've started to modify my thrift donations, and instead of simply donating my "junk" items that nobody else would really want to buy, I've gone ahead and disassembled them into their recyclable components myself. I've discovered an added benefit to this, one being that I understand how many more things work. It has also led to my learning about metal casting. I now have a metal casting foundry in my garage where I can recycle all the aluminum I salvage. I recycle the metal into sundials, trivets, geodesic dome hubs, candle holders, small machine tool parts, and more.*

**Nanda's note** - I have seen Steve's spider-shapes and M.C. Escher-inspired salamander trivets, and they are fantastic! Steve's creations are beautiful, functional, and a true testament to the power of recycling in one's backyard! Thank you Steve, for your inspiring dedication to the MRC program over the years and for truly taking to heart the meaning of reducing, reusing, and recycling!

## Earthworm Facts

*(Courtesy of Kansas State University Research and Extension Horticulture Response Center)*

Earthworms are an integral part of a healthy lawn or garden. Here are a few interesting facts include:

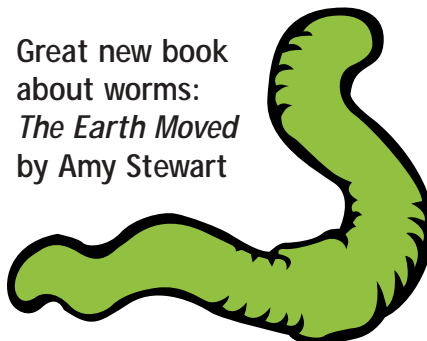
- Their bodies are composed of nearly 70 percent protein, which provides rich food for insect-eating birds and mammals.
- Earthworms can freeze solid, yet still live with a slow thawing process. Any form of ground cover helps mediate the freezing and allows higher survival through the winter.
- Earthworms flee from tiller vibrations. If chopped in half,

they attempt to regenerate. Tilling the soil reduces populations, but not because it kills them. Rather, the oxygen brought into the soil during tilling quickly

reduces the organic matter that earthworms use as a food source.

- When it rains, earthworms come to the surface where foraging and mating are easier. Worms have no lungs. They take their oxygen directly through the skin in either air or water. The wet ground allows them to move without fear of drying out.

Great new book about worms:  
*The Earth Moved*  
by Amy Stewart



For more information, view this website:  
<http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/news/sty/2002/earthworms040302.htm>





## On-Line Compost Bin Sales!

Do you get questions about where to buy compost bins while you are volunteering as an MRC? The King County Solid Waste Division is now sponsoring on-line sales of selected compost bins! You can click on the leaf image at the following website and go straight to buying a bin:

**<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/swd/resrecy/events/compostevents.asp>**.

Discounted items are for **King County** residents only. This project complements city bin sales and provides an additional option for residents of King County outside of Seattle to secure a compost bin.

## Swap & Save

*Please call the Hotline (206-343-8505) if you have any extra materials to donate or if you are looking for something in particular. Your request and/or list of extra materials will appear in this section of the next MRC newsletter.*

**Vernon Jenkins (MRC Class 4)** has a working worm bin that he would like to donate to an interested MRC. If you would like this bin yourself, or know of someone else who might be interested, please call Vernon at 253-839-4959.

**Starbucks** is looking for reuse markets for baled, used grass and burlap coffee bags (some cut at the top, some at the side) from their Kent, WA roasting plant, as well as from their Carson City, NV plant (near Reno). If you are interested in accepting large quantities (by the trailer load) of these bags, or know of a local business who might want to accept the bags, please contact Stacey Long, Starbucks Coffee Co., Property and Utility Management, Seattle, WA, at [StLong@starbucks.com](mailto:StLong@starbucks.com).

**Newsletter Contact:** If you have any questions about the format or contents of this newsletter or to report a change of address, please contact the MRC Hotline (206-343-8505).

Reminder: *Tales* is available via e-mail or post mail. If you want to change the way you are receiving it, simply contact the MRC Hotline and let us know your preference!



### King County

Department of  
Natural Resources and Parks

#### **Solid Waste Division**

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